FROM THE PUBLISHER

Sustainability has been called the “biggest story in the history of humanity” by Thomas Lovejoy of the Heinz Center, and it certainly seems to be true in light of recent coverage. For Arizona and across the country, sustainability is not just a topic of discussion, but the focus of new initiatives by businesses, neighborhoods, public agencies, and universities. The New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman even went so far as to say 2006 was the tipping point for mainstream acceptance of living and working “green.”

Yet, sustainability is about much more than just being green. It requires making policy choices that take the economy, society, and the environment into account. This inclusiveness and complexity prompted Morrison Institute for Public Policy and its Board of Advisors to choose sustainability as the subject of the 6th edition of Arizona Policy Choices, a series created by the Institute especially to provide new insights on critical issues.

The result is Sustainability for Arizona: The Issue of Our Age, a primer on sustainability containing the research of Morrison Institute policy analysts and a wealth of contributed essays from 28 Arizona and national policy thinkers. Not only does this report describe sustainability, but we are also pleased that it has been produced using certified sustainability practices thanks to our partnership with Prisma Graphic and their paper supplier, Stora Enso.

I hope you will read Sustainability for Arizona: The Issue of Our Age and share your thoughts with others. By talking and working together, we can develop wise public policies for a better, more sustainable Arizona.

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sustainability
for arizona
the issue of our age

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FOREWORD

Julie Ann Wrigley, President and Chief Executive Officer
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The dawn of an “urban century” and the effects of climate change are just two of the global circumstances that are combining to make sustainability the defining quest of the 21st century. Sustainability, as a result, is larger than one person, one company, or one country. Its scope, scale, and importance mean that traditional approaches to environmental protection and other complex problems will be insufficient to deliver a sustainable world. Never has it been more important to push the envelope to find new ways to manage growth.

For those who are set on inventing the future rather than simply watching it unfold, sustainability demands investment in innovative thinking, research, and programs with expectations of practical solutions and swift, substantial returns.

Sustainability also represents the century’s greatest opportunity. It brings together those concerned with the environment, the economy, and society on equal terms. Most important, sustainability acknowledges the influence of people’s choices on the environment and accepts human behavior as integral to any solution.

Despite today’s growing interest in sustainability, effective efforts to communicate what sustainability means and the urgency to establish policies, measurements, and training to pursue it are still in their infancy. Sustainability, in fact, remains a mysterious buzzword for many policymakers and portions of the public. While leaders and residents often share concerns about their places, they still wonder: “What does sustainability mean here?” Nevertheless, awareness and commitment are expanding rapidly in Arizona and around the world.

Arizona has the opportunity – many would say the responsibility because of our substantial growth, arid climate, and research capacity – to provide a significant “laboratory” for sustainability practices. As our state focuses on understanding sustainability and creating quality and balance, Arizona can become a model for the world.

The success of business people, philanthropists, scientists, and activists in expanding sustainability from a technical topic dear to a handful of insiders to a widely accepted blueprint for public policies at every level will determine whether the 21st century is one of rebirth and expanding quality of life, or a disaster for people and nature alike. The stakes are too high not to embrace this burgeoning field and take the actions – even the risks – that offer possibilities for real changes and dramatic breakthroughs. Our return on investment for these dollars and energies will come when we find the balance that benefits the environment, business, and communities together.

This report, Sustainability for Arizona: The Issue of Our Age, offers a valuable service to leaders and individuals, whether they are new to sustainability or already experts in sustainable development. It can help people understand and explain how the principles of sustainability may be put into practice anywhere.
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